

to suggest that this form might prove to be a regular if rare migrant through the eastern portions of our State. Some added probability is given this surmise by the fact that I have just taken two more perfectly typical examples of *praticola* at Great Island near Hyannis, Mass., Dec. 15, 1888. Both are males, one an old, the other a young bird. They were in flocks of *O. alpestris* which very possibly contained still other specimens of *praticola*, but I had neither time nor inclination to settle this point definitely by shooting a large number of birds, the only possible way, for the two forms could not be distinguished when living. As it was I killed twenty-three *alpestris* to get the two *praticola*, but none of the former were wasted.—WILLIAM BREWSTER, *Cambridge, Mass.*

Molothrus ater in Massachusetts in December.—On Dec. 8, 1888, I shot two female Cowbirds in Belmont, Mass. For records of this bird in Massachusetts in January, see 'The Auk,' Vol. V, 1888, p. 207.—WALTER FAXON, *Museum of Comparative Zoölogy, Cambridge, Mass.*

The Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) as a Fly-destroyer.—On the 20th of October my little son shot a male Cowbird, winging it slightly; the bird was exceedingly active and fought most vigorously when taken in the hand, pecking savagely, but the moment it was placed on the floor, or on a table, it quieted down, and would step promptly and fearlessly up to an extended hand, and if a fly were presented, pick it off and stand patiently to wait for more. It caught flies with unerring snaps of its beak, as they flew around its head, buzzed against the window panes, or rested on the floor or table top; it drank freely of water, and delighted in picking up fine grains of earth and sand between its meals of flies. My children began to feed it promiscuously, but it refused everything except flies. They took it from room to room, when it was turned loose, and at once began its incessant war upon flies, soon catching every one that was not roosting on the ceiling. Finally after six or seven days of this captivity the supply of live flies gave out, and the bird was taken into the summer kitchen where these insects were in the greatest abundance and where large numbers were dead, having been whipped by the servants and the children; the Cowbird ate very heartily of these dead flies, and the next morning was found dead in its cage, in which it had been regularly shut up and covered every night.

It became fearless, and was easily taken up in the hand, after it had been in the children's hands about a day; it would stand facing them on a table top, and take flies from their hands as rapidly as they could be passed over.—HENRY W. ELLIOTT, *Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.*

Notes upon the Sudden Appearance in Numbers of the Evening Grosbeak at Fort Wingate, New Mexico.—For four years and more (1884-1888) I have made constant and careful observations during all seasons upon the birds that are to be found in the country about Fort Wingate, New

Mexico. Much of this time I have rambled over this region almost daily, collecting birds and mammals and making extended notes upon them. During the first three years the Evening Grosbeak (*Coccothraustes vespertina*) was not to be found in the vicinity during either the vernal or autumnal migrations, and I never so much as heard its note. My mind was about satisfied that the species was not a visitant to this part of the range of the Rocky Mountains, when the doubt was suddenly dissipated last month (October, 1888) while I was out collecting in the pine forests about two miles from the station. There I met with a little party of four individuals, all females, and in wretched plumage; three of these were secured. A little later and in a different locality, this time some two miles in the opposite direction from the Fort, I came upon a very handsome pair, and succeeded in taking the male. He was an old one in fine autumnal feather. I saw no more of them until yesterday (Nov. 10, 1888), at which time I was with my gun in the cedar woods quite close to my house. The day was clear and the temperature moderate, though heavy frosts had occurred on the two preceding days and nights. The woods were actually alive with Robins (*M. m. propinqua*), feeding upon the cedar berries, and I soon discovered that numbers of Evening Grosbeaks were with them. At first I met with these latter in small flocks, from five to ten in number, but as I came into more favorable localities, they appeared in straggling parties consisting of from thirty to a hundred individuals. They mingled with the Robins both in the trees and in the loose flocks that kept passing overhead, and frequently gave vent to their loud and shrill whistle. There was no trouble in approaching them, while feeding upon the berries, as they appeared to be quite unsuspecting and not easily alarmed. My collecting basket soon contained a fine assortment of these truly beautiful creatures, they being in rich autumnal dress, and only occasionally was one to be met with that had not quite completed this plumage. The females differed considerably in their coloring, while in some of the males I observed that the rich orange band of the forehead and superciliary line was carried around in diminishing breadth to fairly meet the stripe of the opposite side at the occiput and completely blend with it there. In the males, too, the plumage of the legs is black, with the feathers each narrowly bordered with yellowish green; this feature is not usually described by ornithologists. Only a few moments ago I made up some half dozen skins of these birds, and my two sons each made a pair more apiece, all carefully selected. I was not a little surprised to find my experiences both in this and in shooting the specimens to be at complete variance with those of Dr. Merrill, as mentioned by him in a recent issue of 'The Auk' (Oct. 1888, p. 357). Neither I nor my sons found any difficulty whatever in making capital skins of these specimens, and I am quite sure I did not lose more than a feather to a bird in those that I prepared, and the skin in none of them appeared to me to be unusually thin. Moreover, some of them were killed with No. 8 shot, and in falling bumped down through the pine trees without any apparent damage, and only with the loss of a feather or two. It is diffi-

cult for me to account for this difference in our observations, infinitely the more so when the statement comes from the pen of such an accurate describer as is Dr. Merrill.

This extraordinary flight of these Grosbeaks here, convinces me that either the bird is inclined to be at times very erratic in its migrations, or else it may have to do with the approaching season, perhaps indicating a coming winter of unusual severity.

An excellent series of skeletons rewarded my collecting, and as I predicted in my letter in the October 'Auk', the *secondary palatine processes* are absent, the entire skull much resembling that part of the skeleton in *Coccothraustes vulgaris*, as figured for us by Huxley.—R. W. SHUFELDT, *Fort Wingate, New Mexico.*

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Loggerhead Shrike at Bridgeport, Connecticut. — The following are the records of the Loggerhead Shrike at Bridgeport, Conn.: late in August, 1880, one seen; late in August, 1885, two seen together; August 29, 1888, two seen together, one of which I shot. Mr. J. A. Allen pronounced this a *Lanius ludovicianus excubitorides* and a bird of the year. All these birds were seen at the sea beach. The gizzard of the one killed was filled with grasshoppers.—C. K. AVERILL, JR., *Bridgeport, Conn.*

First Occurrence of the Philadelphia Vireo near Washington, D. C.—This bird is certainly rare with us, having until this spring escaped notice though expected and looked for. While collecting on the evening of May 17, 1888, on the Virginia side of the Potomac near the new bridge, I took a specimen which was industriously feeding with Red-eyed Vireos in the willows on the marshy bottom lands.—WILLIAM PALMER, *Washington, D. C.*

Unusual Nesting Site of Dendroica virens.—There stands, a little aside from a public road on Cape Elizabeth, Maine, on the top of a small hillock, some distance from any woods, a small pagoda of two stories, which is almost nightly filled by noisy pleasure-seekers. About it a grape-vine grows luxuriantly, and here, scarcely ten feet from the ground and only six from the floor of the piazza, a pair of Black-throated Green Warblers built their nest in the spring of 1888. Placed on the main stem of the vine, and so surrounded by leaves and twigs as to be absolutely invisible from the outside, it was nevertheless in plain sight the moment one stepped inside the sheltering vine upon the piazza. When I found the nest on June 29 it contained two eggs and one young bird, and on July 1 the eggs had hatched.—JOHN C. BROWN, *Portland, Maine.*

A Rare Bird in Chester Co., South Carolina. — I had been waiting all the morning of Oct. 11, 1888, for the cessation of the heavy gale and driving rain that had begun during the previous night, for I was anxious to get out into the woods and see what effect the storm was having on the